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GEORGE A. BINGHAM

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THE writing of a biographical note upon the life of a dear friend, now departed, can never be an easy or a pleasant undertaking. It can only be a task, a melancholy duty, even if undertaken as a labor of love. It rouses regretful memories of days of pleasant association irrevocably gone, in the work of what was in its day one of the very best of the proprietary schools of medicine on this continent, Trinity Medical College, Toronto, when that particular stage in the development of medical teaching and in the production of a useful body of practitioners, was serving the public interest well, and paving the way for the advent during the past twenty years or so, of the still more developed type of teaching institution with which we have become familiar.

No one of the scores of teachers, in Canada and the United States, who have watched the transition, and borne a personal part in both the older and the newer systems, has filled a larger place, or served his day and generation more worthily in both, than the subject of this sketch.

Like very many of those in his chosen profession who have come to eminence in it, Bingham came of sound Old Country yeoman stock. He was born in Durham County, in the Province of Ontario, on August 28, 1860, the son of William and Elizabeth (Mills) Bingham, of that Irish Presbyterian stock which has done so much for the other lands to which it has migrated. His early education was in the public schools and in the high school of his own county, in Bowmanville, Ontario. After qualifying as a public school teacher at the normal school, Toronto, he served as head master for two years in the public school of Harriston, Ontario, then entered Trinity Medical College as an undergraduate in 1880, and after a distinguished course, graduated in 1884, both in Trinity University as M.D., C.M. and in the University of Toronto as M.B. After some postgraduate work in New York, and a brief period of practice at Manila, Ontario, near his old home, where he promptly became a great favorite in his new career, he returned to Toronto at the request of the late Dean Walter B. Geikie, M.D., of his old school, to begin his career as medical teacher in the dissecting room of his Alma Mater. From 1884 to 1889 he was demonstrator of anatomy. In 1890 he became professor of practical anatomy, and in 1892 professor of surgical anatomy as successor to Dr. Luke Teskey.

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It was in this chair that his pre-eminent ability as a teacher came to be fully known. His capacity in correlating the needs of the surgeon with the facts of anatomy, and the facile vivid skill with which he set his knowledge before the minds of his classes, will not be forgotten by anyone who had the good fortune to be trained by him, for he always displayed to the full that prime qualification of the wise teacher, the ability and the will to place himself in the position of those whom he was teaching, to appreciate both their needs and their difficulties, and the present state of their knowledge as well as their future requirements.

He became later professor of clinical surgery in Trinity Medical College, and in 1903, upon the amalgamation of the medical faculties of Trinity College and the University of Toronto, was made a professor of clinical surgery in the new faculty of the University, and chief of one of the surgical divisions of the reorganized Toronto General Hospital, which position he was filling, with the utmost satisfaction to all concerned, at the time of his death.

He had held for years, before the amalgamation of the faculties, surgical appointments on the staffs of St. Michael's Hospital, The Toronto General Hospital, and the Hospital for Sick Children, in each of which he had been advanced till he held the position of full surgeon in 1903, transferring his whole services to the staff of the Toronto General Hospital upon its re-organization.

Apart from his outstanding capacity as a teacher, mention should be made of his qualifications as a surgeon. Physically he was strikingly fitted for his work. His strong, well balanced presence, his handsome massive head, and thoughtful cheerful countenance, his quiet unassuming air of confidence and power, his dignified kindly demeanor, always attracted both patients and students. He was never known to be mean or narrow or "top-lofty" in his outlook upon life or his relationships with his colleagues. He was never the mere operator, but always the wise bold conservative and sympathetic surgeon, with the mind of the physician as well. His sound early education had given him, as all good education does, a love of good literature, and this with his natural gift for self-expression, made him an excellent speaker. Very few of his confrères were his equal in the art of public speaking, for he had ideas, and was clear, accurate, and even eloquent in presenting them to his audiences.

Outside of his professional work, he took a wide interest in the various medical organizations of the city and beyond. He was for some time a member of the senate of the University of Toronto, and was a charter member of the Academy of Medicine of Toronto, and a past president of the Æsculapian Club, of the Toronto Clinical Society, and of the Ontario Medical Association. During the two years before his death he had done very much, by extensive travel and addressing of medical audiences, both in the Western Provinces as far as British Columbia and in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia in the East, to bring new strength to the Canadian Medical Association and its Journal.

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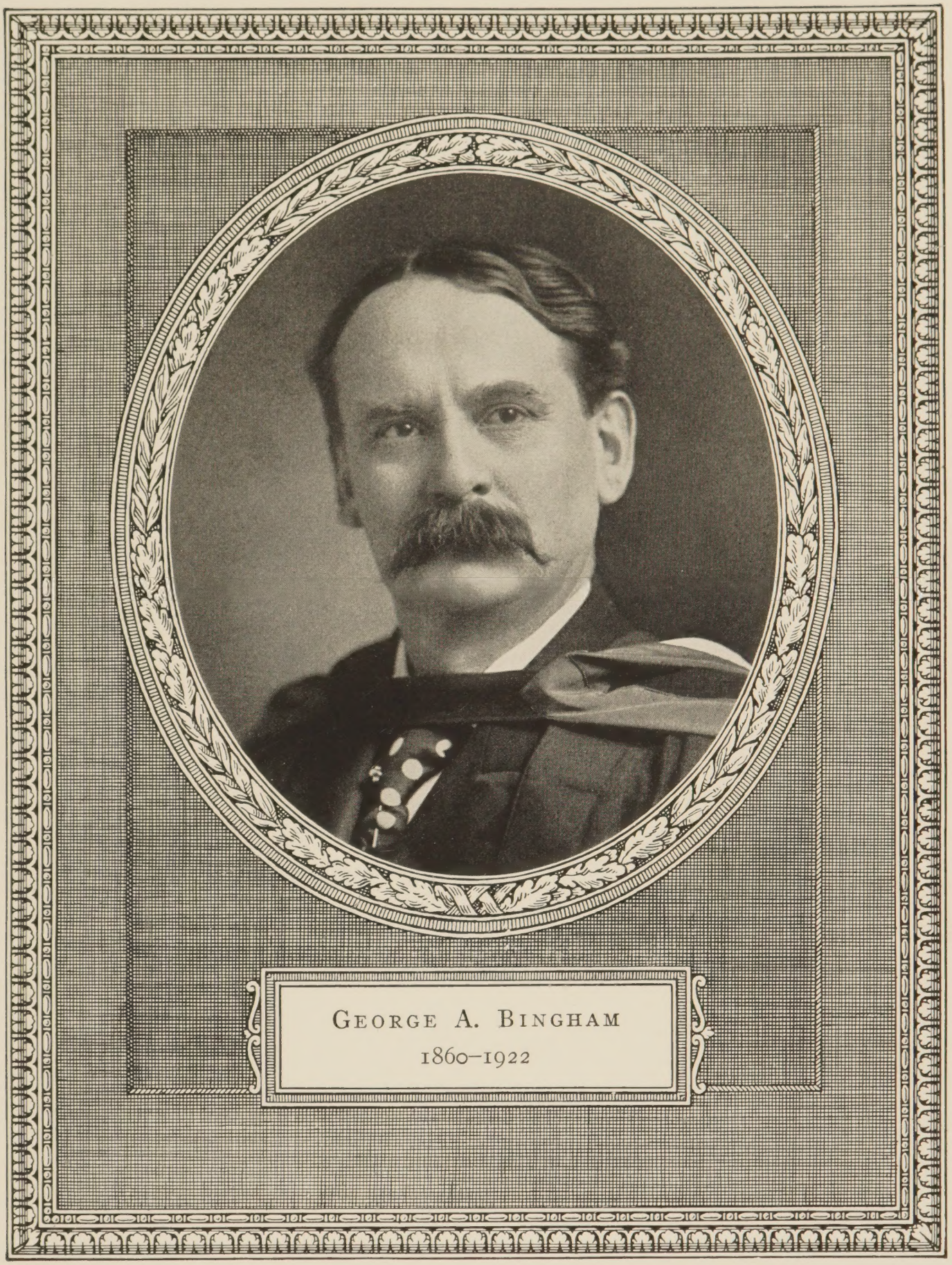

GEORGE A. BINGHAM
1860–1922

His lamented death occurred on March 1, 1922. His health had been for some months indifferent, and he was on the point of acceding to the urgent advice of some of his confrères to give up his winter work and classes and go south to recuperate, when on February 9, he fell ill with a sudden pneumonia. The disease, though severe in onset, ran an unexpectedly favorable course, till after an early pseudo-crisis symptoms of exhaustion developed ending in coma and death.

His last thoughts were of his classes and his work, even as his students had always held first place in his sympathy and friendships. His best monument is the place he holds in the respect and affections of countless hearts now scattered over all parts of Canada and the United States, and in Mission Fields and in Public Services in all parts of our widespread Empire, and outside it as well.

His funeral service was held in Convocation Hall at the University he had served so well, and lectures were suspended for the day, in respect to his memory.